

SHERIFF KNOTT LOSES FIGHT WITH 'HUNGER STRIKERS'

His Boarders in Berkeley
Hotel Win Self-Deter-
mination in Prices.

It is a story of a "hunger strike" in a Fifth Avenue hotel, which may not sound strange to one familiar with Fifth Avenue hotel prices, but which becomes interesting when one learns that it is a family hotel where the guests fought for self-determination in the management of the dining room, stuck out for what they conceived as their rights on precedents established when Grant was President, and won hands down and knew under the table, where once more they're eating rations priced reasonably.

The hotel is the Berkeley at Fifth Avenue and Ninth Street, one of the oldest of the old family hotels in the city. The building is owned by the Knickerbocker Estate. The hotel is operated by the Knott Hotel Syndicate, whose directing head is Sheriff David

Knott. Its guests number many people prominent in New York—capitalists, lawyers, doctors, writers, and their families—some of whom have been living in the Berkeley more than a quarter-century and were accustomed to have things quite their own way, even in a New York hotel. No one objected when the rents were given a considerable tilt upward. They were considered still reasonable, compared with charges in other hotels and taking into account the service rendered, and no one did more than to demur faintly when the management conveyed the information that it had found it necessary also to revise the rates in the restaurant, where hitherto one had paid for each meal one ate.

The new rates fixed a minimum charge of \$25 weekly for each guest, whether or not one ate all meals. The guests consented.

Nearly all arranged to eat most of their meals at home after that. And they did, until the dining room was closed for the summer for repairs, and because many of the guests had gone to the country.

Then, late in September, when the dining room was about to be opened again and a head waiter from Palm Beach was about to be installed, guests of the Berkeley were notified that the minimum weekly rate thereafter was to be \$30, with no rebate unless twenty-one consecutive meals were missed, and then each guest was to be charged \$9 weekly as a sort of dining room membership fee.

First, these old residents of this old hotel raised their eyebrows. Then they raised their voices in protest.

And as they spoke, their wrath also was raised.

Laurence L. Briggs, President of the American Flying Club, objected. So did Edmund W. Fairchild, the publisher, and Leeds Johnson, the lawyer, and Edmund Nash, the capitalist, and Dr. Howard Duffield, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at Fifth Avenue and 11th Street, and Anne Rittenhouse, the writer, and so also did John Morris, who could recall distinctly that his family had lived in the Berkeley ever since it was a hotel.

"Why you can't do this to us," some of them protested. "We've been living here since Gen. Grant was President. The house was operated all right then, and you can't do this now."

"We'll see," the hotel management was reported as answering. "You people can run a lot of things, but you can't run this hotel."

The "hunger strike" followed. At least it was a hunger strike for the Berkeley. Few of the 400 guests went to the newly decorated dining room, and the Palm Beach head waiter spent most of his time waiting, merely waiting, and serving hardly any one. How the guests lived for the three weeks of the strike even Sheriff Knott must guess, but they ate no Berkeley food. Not a morsel.

Maybe it was because the Berkeley feared all its guests were starving, or maybe it was because virtually all of them had leases which had months to run, but the hotel gave in, or, if you would have it so, gave up. Anyway, capitulations were made. The dining room had lost \$1,150. The old weekly rate was re-established.

The guests are eating again at the Berkeley. The head waiter is serving persons other than the proprietors. The principle of self-determination is fixed in the dining room and, as one person put it:

The guests at the Berkeley have been running it since Grant was President and will continue to run it."

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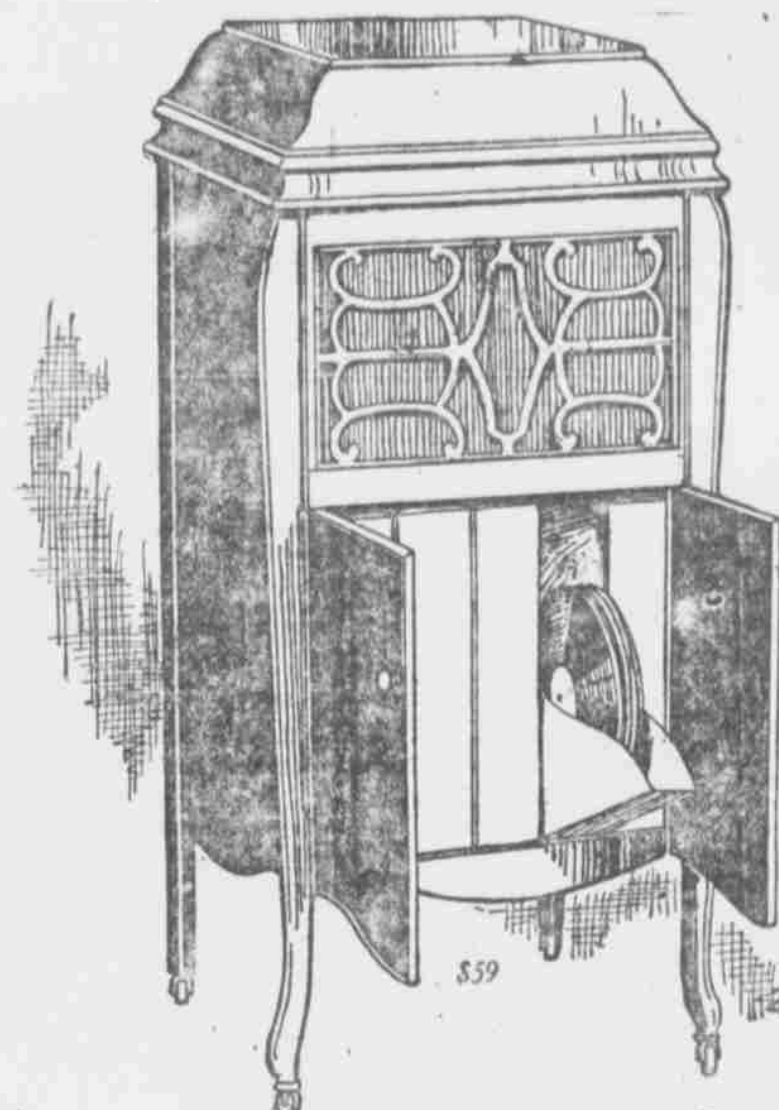
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